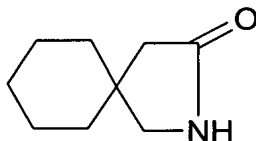


Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

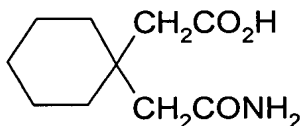
1. (Currently Amended) An improved process for the preparation of gabalactam of the formula 1



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which comprises

- (i) ~~P~~preparing an aqueous solution of an alkali or alkaline earth metal hydroxide in a concentration ranging from 10 to 20% by weight, adding bromine to the resulting solution to give the appropriate alkali or alkaline earth metal hypobromite solution having a concentration ranging from 5 to 10% by weight,
- (ii) adding 1 part by weight of an amide of the formula 4



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- to 7.5 to 9.5 parts by weight, of the solution of the alkali/alkaline earth metal hypobromite obtained in step (i) during a period in the range of 1 to 4 hours, at a temperature in the range of -10 to + 10 degrees C,
- (iii) ~~K~~keeping the resultant mixture for ageing in the temperature in the range of -10 to +10 degrees C for a period in the range of 0.5 to 2 hours,
- (iv) ~~H~~heating the mixture gradually to a temperature in the range of 80 to 100 degrees C, for a period in the range of 3 to 8 hours and aging for 5 to 8 hours,
- (v) ~~C~~cooling the reaction mixture to a temperature in the range of 30 to 50 degrees C,
- (vi) ~~E~~extracting the mixture using a nonpolar solvent or a mixture thereof,

- (vii) subjecting the resulting ~~organic layer washed~~ aqueous layer to the steps of ~~(iii)~~ (iv) to (v) defined above,
 - (viii) ~~C~~combining the organic layers obtained in steps (vi) & (vii) together,
 - (ix) washing resulting combined organic layers with water at a temperature in the range of 30 to 35 degrees C and
 - (x) ~~D~~distilling of the organic solvent at a temperature in the range of 60 to 110 ~~deg~~ degrees C, under reduced pressure.
-
- 2. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein in ~~the~~ step (i) the alkali metal ~~used is an alkali~~ hydroxide, ~~more preferably is~~ sodium hydroxide.
 - 3. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein in ~~the~~ step (i) the concentration of the alkali / alkaline earth metal hydroxide solution is in a range from 10 to 15% more preferably 12.5%.
 - 4. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein ~~in~~ the concentration of the hypobromite is in the range of 5 to 8 % and more preferably 7% by weight.
 - 5. (Previously Presented) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the amount of hypobromite added is in the range of 8 to 9 parts, more preferably 8.5 to 9 parts of the solution of sodium hypobromite.
 - 6. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the addition is ~~effected~~ performed during a period ranging ~~form~~ from 1 to 3 hours, more preferably 1 to 2 hours.
 - 7. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the temperature employed during the addition is maintained at preferably -5 to +5 degrees C, more preferably -5 to 0 degrees C.

8. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the aging of the reaction mixture is ~~effected~~ **performed** at a temperature in the range of -5 to ~~-0~~ **0** degrees C, preferably for a period in the range of 0.5 to 1.5 ~~hrs~~ **hours** and more preferably for 1 ~~hr~~ **hour**.
9. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein in ~~the~~ step (iii) the heating is ~~effected~~ **performed** preferably at a temperature in the range of 80 to 90 degrees C, more preferably 80 to 85 degrees C.
10. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 9 wherein the heating is ~~effected~~ **performed** during a period of 4 to 6 hours, more preferably for 4 hours.
11. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the cooling is ~~effected~~ **performed** to a temperature in the range of 35 to 45 degrees C, more preferably 40 degrees C.
12. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the extraction is done using an aliphatic or aromatic ~~hydrocarbon~~ **nonpolar** solvent such as ethylene dichloride, methylene dichloride, hexane and toluene and more preferably an aromatic **nonpolar** solvent like toluene.
13. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the ~~organic solvent-extracted~~ aqueous layer is once again heated to a temperature in the range of 80 to 100 degrees C during a period of 3 to 8 ~~hrs~~ **hours**, aged for 5 to 8 ~~hrs~~ **hours** cooled and re-extracted with toluene.
14. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the combined organic layers is treated with charcoal for removing any coloring matter present in it.

15. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the distilling of the organic solvent is done preferably between 60 to 90 degrees C and more preferably between 60 to 65 degrees C under reduced pressure.